



Billing Code 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XA999

Taking and Importing of Marine Mammals

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice; affirmative finding renewal.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NMFS, (Assistant Administrator) has granted an affirmative finding 2-year renewal to the Government of Ecuador under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). This affirmative finding renewal will allow yellowfin tuna harvested in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean (ETP) in compliance with the International Dolphin Conservation Program (IDCP) by Ecuadorian-flag purse seine vessels or purse seine vessels operating under Ecuadorian jurisdiction to be imported into the United States. The affirmative finding renewal was based on review of documentary evidence submitted by the Government of Ecuador and obtained from the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC).

DATES: The affirmative finding renewal is effective from April 1, 2011, through March 31, 2013 (retroactive).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Regional Administrator, Southwest Region, NMFS, 501 West Ocean Boulevard, Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213; phone 562-980-4000; fax 562-980-4018.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The MMPA, 16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq., allows the entry

into the United States of yellowfin tuna harvested by purse seine vessels in the ETP under certain conditions. If requested by the harvesting nation, the Assistant Administrator will determine whether to make an affirmative finding based upon documentary evidence provided by the government of the harvesting nation, the IATTC, or the Department of State.

The affirmative finding process requires that the harvesting nation is meeting its obligations under the IDCP and obligations of membership in the IATTC. Every 5 years, the government of the harvesting nation must request an affirmative finding and submit the required documentary evidence directly to the Assistant Administrator. NMFS reviews the affirmative finding and determine whether the harvesting nation continues to meet the requirements. A nation may provide information related to compliance with IDCP and IATTC measures directly to NMFS on an annual basis or may authorize the IATTC to release the information to NMFS to annually renew an affirmative finding determination without an application from the harvesting nation.

An affirmative finding will be terminated, in consultation with the Secretary of State, if the Assistant Administrator determines that the requirements of 50 CFR 216.24(f) are no longer being met or that a nation is consistently failing to take enforcement actions on violations, thereby diminishing the effectiveness of the IDCP.

As a part of the affirmative finding process set forth in 50 CFR 216.24(f), the Assistant Administrator considered documentary evidence submitted by the Government of Ecuador or obtained from the IATTC and has determined that Ecuador has met the requirements under the MMPA to receive a renewal of their affirmative finding.

After consultation with the Department of State, the Assistant Administrator issued Ecuador's affirmative finding renewal, allowing the continued importation into the United States

of yellowfin tuna and products derived from yellowfin tuna harvested in the ETP by Ecuadorian-flag purse seine vessels or purse seine vessels operating under Ecuadorian jurisdiction through March 31, 2013.

Dated: March 7, 2012.

Alan D. Risenhoover,
Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

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